

KINSHIP

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attitude toward one's blood relations than by quoting Mrs. 602
Hoernlé:

Here, then, is a large body of kin drawn intimately into contact with the lives of each generation. Looking out into the world from his own home, the Bantu child knows where he may seek hospitality and succour of every kind; where, also, he may of right be called upon to render assistance in case of need. The barriers of reserve shutting off human beings from one another are largely down so far as these classes of relatives are concerned, so that for economic assistance, for friendly counsel, in time of sorrow and in time of joy, these are the natural categories of people to turn to, the core of people with whom one is close-knit from birth in a web of reciprocal rights and duties.¹

The Kin

Relatives by Marriage. Marriage profoundly alters the relationship of those who enter into it, that is, the two families. It must be entered into with great care and with due regard for all factors concerned in order that the balance of life may be maintained. It seems that the financial arrangements (*ilombo*) are designed to restore to the bride's family an equivalence for her loss, since marriage is patrilocal. The Ovimbundu consider mutual respect between the two families to be a necessary basis for a successful marriage. Respect (*esumbilo*) is the reason assigned by thoughtful 581^o
Ovimbundu for the various avoidances (*oku liyuvuila*) enjoined upon the principals and their respective families. In the first place, the husband and wife must show their respect for each other by avoiding certain actions as, for example, either one speaking the name of the other. 593]

This mutual respect finds its most dramatic symbol in the treatment which the husband must accord his mother-in-law, the bride her father-in-law. They must avoid seeing each other, and if it is necessary to converse, it must be done out of sight, or with gaze averted. Both husband and wife must also avoid pronouncing the names of the parents-in-law. By the principle of extended relationships, this behaviour applies to the relations of the husband and the wife with *all* their parents-in-law of the opposite sex. As all the mother's 'sisters' are 'mother', so to the husband they are all *ndatembo* (mother-in-law). Likewise, the father's 'brothers' all 606

¹ In Schapera, op. cit., 1937, p. 73.

ADOLESCENCE

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hardship and the cruelty of the initiation camps have their parallel 881
in the trading and slave-raiding expeditions of the past, but this 174
is practically the only recognizable likeness. May it not be that
initiation camps were adopted or revived to fill the lacuna that
came about when trading expeditions ceased? As an 'educational
institution' they do not seem to fit into the culture.

Whether with or without initiation rites, adolescence is largely 882
preparation for marriage and full adult life. Traditionally, adolescence is not a time of conflict or of stress. Young people who as children had already assumed in considerable degree the responsibilities of life met the onset of puberty and made the transition to adult life without fuss or flourish. On the whole there was relatively small chance for conflict between the generations, since the place of each is recognized as mutually complementary. Nor was there competition between the sexes. This ordered and well-balanced society began to change with the rubber trade, and with the beginning of the present century changes have come rapidly. Contract and *corvée* labour have brought profound changes, especially for the young men. As for the girls, a few have gone to the towns; relatively few however, other than those who attend a boarding-school, lead a life essentially different from that which has been traditionally theirs. Conflict between the generations, adolescence as a period of stress, delinquency, hysteria, and other problems, some of them characteristic of our own culture, are beginning to appear among the young people of the mission schools. I feel that these manifestations are quite uncharacteristic of Umbundu culture.

As for adult life, there are no recognized divisions or separate 885
periods. Adulthood comes with marriage and marriage is only 581
recognized as fully complete with the birth of a child. The early years of marriage and family rearing are years of much hard work with less time for leisure or enjoyment than either before or after. It is not postponed, however, on that account. If the young man marries relatively late, it is largely because of the very considerable economic burdens involved. Singleness is coveted by no one. The Umbundu ideal is mature life when one may have acquired competence, but at any rate is assured of descendants and care in old age. There is not, however, any ceremonial status such as the fixing of the wax ring among the Thonga,¹ nor does the mature Ocimbundu cease to do manual labour. There may be some

¹ Junod, op. cit., 1927, vol. i, p. 129 f.

885 preference for a polygynous household at this age, but no definite
581 tradition which urges one 'to become lord and master of a complete
circular village'.¹ Women are happiest while carrying a baby on
the back.

[538]

Onyima yitaa ka yi mōlī omōlā,
Back good (yet) it does not see a child,

888 wails a childless woman. No grandmother is satisfied without
herself caring for at least one grandchild. Old age is subject to its
own burden of the years but among the Ovimbundu the aged are
treated with much respect and deference.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS V-VII

561 THE periods in the life of an Ocimbundu may be summarized as follows:

1. The 'Marginal' Period of the First Week (*ocitete*) until the funicle drops.
2. The Baby Proper (second week until about seventh month) (*oñaña*) (from turning black until sitting alone).
3. The Sitting-baby or Toddler (*ocisembe*) (from sitting alone until mastery of walking and completion of weaning).
4. Early Childhood (from weaning until about 9 years) (*oneñe*). Period of socio-psychological education.
5. Later Childhood (from about 9 until puberty) (*omōlā*). Period of technical training and assumption of economic responsibility.
6. Adolescence (from puberty until marriage). Period of preparation for marriage and full adulthood.
7. First Year of Marriage, during which the bride completes her training under her mother-in-law's guidance.
8. Full Adulthood (from birth of first child).

¹ Junod, op. cit., 1927, vol. i, p. 127.

MARRIAGE

Marriages may also be ended by the wife leaving her husband. 586
This may be the consequence of quarrels; however at times a woman may just run off without any apparent reason. Her husband may go to her kin and bring her back or may just get married again—such an episode may occur after many years of a marriage which has previously appeared happy. People who have been married previously can be married again 587 according to the pattern described previously. Middle-aged and elderly people would leave out the festivities and would just have the meal together, or simply count themselves as married by the payment of the bridewealth.

There does exist a formal ceremony of divorce in which 586 maize flour is smeared on the upper part of the face by the husband, and this will take place in the presence of representatives of the wife's kin. A man will do this when his wife has shown herself disrespectful to him or has quarrelled with his kin or her co-wife. As the Ovimbundu regard marriage as 587 being for the procreation of children, a barren wife should be, 588 they say, sent away but often in practice this is not done, if the wife is otherwise satisfactory.

Legally, the Portuguese administration recognizes both the 582 customary marriage and the Catholic marriage ceremony. The Catholic missions report to the post people who, having been married in church, then make customary marriages, and these may be subjected to such sanctions as being sent to contract labour. The Protestant church marriages are not apparently legally recognized but they are subject to the authority of the Protestant church courts which grant divorces on certain grounds. The *chefe de posto* on his annual visit to take the check on the census may get angry with polygynists, but in fact no very effective administrative action exists with regard to indigenous marriage.

The motives given for polygynous marriage are the desire 585 to have many children and (in the case of a chief) the need to have cooks to provide hospitality for guests. Large-scale polygyny is thought to be rather funny; I was told, as something amusing, that the former chief Mbatl had 17 wives. Kafelo, the former chief of Gumba, had 6 wives, the highest number of continuing polygynous marriages I found. In Epalanga out of